WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1   1.   A method for navigating and displaying a plurality of relational objects,

2   wherein the plurality of relational objects comprise a directed graph, the directed graph

3   further comprising a plurality of hierarchies wherein a first of the plurality of hierarchies

4   shares a common node with a second of the plurality of hierarchies, wherein the common

5   node is the parent node for a child sub-tree, and wherein at least one of the first and second

6   hierarchies does not include all nodes of the child sub-tree, comprising:

7   receiving a selection input;

8   identifying, based on the selection input, a focus node, the focus node being one of the

9   plurality of relational objects;

10   displaying the focus node on a display medium;

11   determining whether a child node of the focus node exists, wherein the child node

12   comprises one of the plurality of relational objects other than the focus node, the child node

13   having a subordinate relationship with the focus node;

14   if a child node exists, displaying on the display medium, the child node;

15   determining whether a parent node of the focus node exists, wherein the parent node

16   comprises one of the plurality of relational objects other than the focus node and the child

17   node, the focus node having a relationship subordinate to the parent node; and

18   if a parent object exists, displaying on a display medium the parent node.

1   2.   The method recited in Claim 1, wherein displaying the focus node further

2   comprises displaying the focus node in a textual format, wherein the textual format is a

3   format other than a format that illustrates the focus object and the first related object as nodes

4   connected by a graphical relationship symbol such as a line or arrow.

1   3.   The method recited in Claim 1, further comprising:

2   displaying as a top grouping a subset of the plurality of relational objects;

3   wherein receiving a selection input further comprises receiving a selection input that

4   corresponds to a selected one of the relational objects in the top grouping.

1   4.   The method recited in Claim 1, further comprising:

2   receiving a find input;

3   performing a search of the plurality of relational objects in order to determine whether

4   one or more of the relational objects is associated with the find input;

5   if one or more of the relational objects is associated with the find input, displaying as

6   a find grouping the one or more relational objects associated with the find input.

1   5.   The method recited in Claim 4, wherein:

2   the selection input identifies one of the relational objects in the find grouping.

1   6.   The method recited in Claim 1, wherein:

2   one or more of the plurality of relational objects represents a person.